



Family Giving Tree™

FGT History

In 1990, Jennifer Cullenbine founded Family Giving Tree as her San Jose State University MBA project with her classmate Todd Yoshida. The program started with the Holiday Wish Drive, and the Back-to-School Drive was added in 1996 to equip underserved students for the classroom. 33 years later, Family Giving Tree is the largest gift and backpack donation program in California. FGT currently works with over 500 agencies and schools serving low-income Bay Area residents to fulfill their need for gifts and school supplies.

With each drive, thousands of volunteers come to the FGT warehouse to prepare backpacks and gifts for distribution to agencies. Volunteerism is a part of FGT's mission, and the organization accepts volunteers of all ages at the warehouse, allowing for families, school groups, and scout troops to give back to their community.

Since 1990, FGT has assisted over 2.1 million financially challenged Bay Area residents--the majority of whom are children.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Connecting those who can give to those in need with educational support, gifts, and volunteerism.

Vision

We envision a world where giving brings joy, offers hope, and creates learning possibilities.

Values

Community – We foster an inclusive culture of volunteerism and philanthropy with people of all ages and backgrounds. We strive to inspire people to “pay it forward” by uplifting others in our community.

Kindness – We demonstrate genuine empathy and compassion in all that we do. We are advocates for treating people with respect and consideration. We make giving back a joyful experience.

Empowerment – We recognize that we don't all start from the same place in the world. Through community alliances, we provide those we serve with gifts and tools to give them the equitable opportunity to dream and grow.

Adaptability – We collaborate creatively to adapt and provide relevant resources to meet community needs. Family Giving Tree tests new ideas and explores innovative ways of delivering value to our community.

Accountability – We take initiative to meet our commitments to each other and to our volunteers, agencies, donors, and community. We are responsible stewards of the gifts we receive on behalf of those we serve.

Back-to-School Drive Facts and Figures

Overall facts:

- Back-to-School (BTS) Drive: Started in 1996 (2023 is the 28th annual BTS)
- 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator
- In December 2021, FGT celebrated its "2 Million Served" milestone
- Total Individuals served since 1990: Over 2.1 million

11 Bay Area Counties served with backpacks:

1. Alameda
2. Contra Costa
3. Monterey
4. Napa
5. Sacramento
6. San Benito
7. San Francisco
8. San Mateo
9. Santa Clara
10. Santa Cruz
11. Sonoma

2022 BTS Metrics

of backpacks delivered: 28,677

of schools supported: 144

total volunteers: 1,479

Process

Back-to-School Drive

Family Giving Tree works to fulfill the critical need for backpacks filled with school supplies for K-12 students in schools where a high percentage (80% or more) of the student population is deemed socioeconomically disadvantaged: students who are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals; or have parents/guardians who did not receive a high school diploma. Before COVID and the implementation of free and reduced-price meals for all California public school students in 2022, over 350,000 students in the Bay Area qualified to be backpack recipients.

Once FGT and a school have decided to partner, the school informs FGT of the number of backpacks it requires per grade level. FGT then prints backpack tags for three grade groups: K-2, 3-5, and 6-12, and distributes them to Drive Leaders, who display them in their office or community spaces. Individuals take a tag and shop to buy a backpack and fill it with the age-appropriate supplies listed on the tag. After attaching the tag to the backpack, donors bring them back to their Drive Leader, who delivers the backpacks to our warehouse.

At the FGT warehouse, volunteers check bags for quality, ensuring that every backpack has all the listed supplies and then each is sorted appropriately. Schools then come to the warehouse to pick up their backpacks and deliver them to their recipients at the beginning of the school year.

At the same time, supporters who want to support the Drive through an online donation can easily select a backpack and supplies on FGT's Virtual Giving Tree knowing that these backpacks will be placed into the hands of students for the start of the new school year.

The FGT Team

Leadership



Jennifer Cullenbine - CEO and Founder

Co-founder of the Family Giving Tree, today Jennifer serves as Queen Elf and Chief Executive Officer. Jennifer earned her Master's degree in Business Administration from San Jose State University, where the very idea for the Family Giving Tree was born. Jennifer is affiliated with many organizations, including the Entrepreneurs Organization, The Milpitas Chamber of Commerce, and the Rotary Club of Milpitas where she recently served as president.



Jess Gutierrez - Chief Financial Officer

As he does for several other nonprofits, Jess currently acts as Family Giving Tree's part-time CFO. With a B.S. from Santa Clara University and an MBA from Pepperdine University, Jess is an expert in small-to-medium-sized operations with added extensive work in the nonprofit sector. His specialization is in financial reporting, internal controls, business planning, financial systems, and organization development.



Jill Mitsch - Deputy Director

Jill grew up in the Bay Area and graduated from San Jose State University with a B.A. in English. Jill has worked in the non-profit sector since 2007 and serves on the board of directors of the Association of Fundraising Professionals Silicon Valley Chapter. In 2013, Jill and a couple of her friends launched 100+ Women Who Care Silicon Valley, a women's giving circle that has raised over \$60,000 for local nonprofits.



Charlotte Wood - Director of Marketing

A Rhode Island native, Charlotte graduated with a B.A. in Studio Art from Kenyon College and pursued a career in advertising. Working on the agency side for years back east, she brought her skills to Silicon Valley and served on the client side as an advertising and media manager in the high-tech sector before opening a consulting business.

Staff

Amelia Johnson Capsuto: Individual Giving Officer

Briana Yarbrough: Content Creator

Celeste Delamore: HWD Agency Coordinator

Dena Vong Chanh: Major Gifts Officer

Doug Harney: Facilities and Trucking

Evelyn Hernandez: BTS Agency Coordinator

Evelyn Huynh: Drive Leader Coordinator

Kim Foster: Development Associate

Kristina Afzal: Salesforce Tech Support Specialist

Liza Levin: Executive Assistant

Margarita Galindo: Institutional Giving Officer

Mikey J Smith: Marketing Coordinator

Shannon Fey: Volunteer Coordinator

Tennille Fyre: Bookkeeper/Payroll Specialist

Testimonials

Teachers:

"Entering the classroom, they are not preoccupied with what they need. They come in with more confidence. It makes a difference. It is an extremely powerful thing. Thank you!"

Students:

"Thanks for helping me do better in school. I don't get distracted as much. When you don't have supplies you have to ask the teacher, and it distracts the other kids."

"Thank you for my new Avenger's backpack. My supplies are so cool! At home I will get to use the supplies for my homework, I have everything I need! My mom and dad say thank you!"

-Santa Clara County Students

Agency Representatives:

"Pencils are like gold... You might not think much about it, but the children show up without pencils. They wouldn't be able to do homework without that donation. But because of Family Giving Tree's donation every year, our homework centers are stocked with pencils."

-Fred McCasland, Site Director, Boys & Girls Clubs of Silicon Valley

"Walking into school at the beginning of the school year has a lot of stress that comes along with it for teachers, staff, and students alike—but walking into a classroom and not being ready, not having the tools or the supplies that you need when the teacher says, "pull out a piece of paper, pull out your pencil" —it's a lot, it doesn't feel good. That can kind of catapult into not feeling comfortable at school, and not feeling comfortable learning. That might seem drastic, but I've seen it happen. So we want to give our students the best foot forward in terms of, feeling comfortable and feeling like the classroom is a place where they belong, and that they have what they need."

-Monie Bohnsack, Wellness Center Coordinator, Ygnacio Valley High School

Supporting Documents

Back-to-School Drive Case Statement

[Why Backpacks Infographic](#)

Links

Website: <https://fgt.org>

Facebook: [/familygivingtree](#)

Instagram: [/familygivingtree](#)

YouTube: [/familygivingtree](#)

Linkedin: [/company/the-family-giving-tree](#)

Contact Info

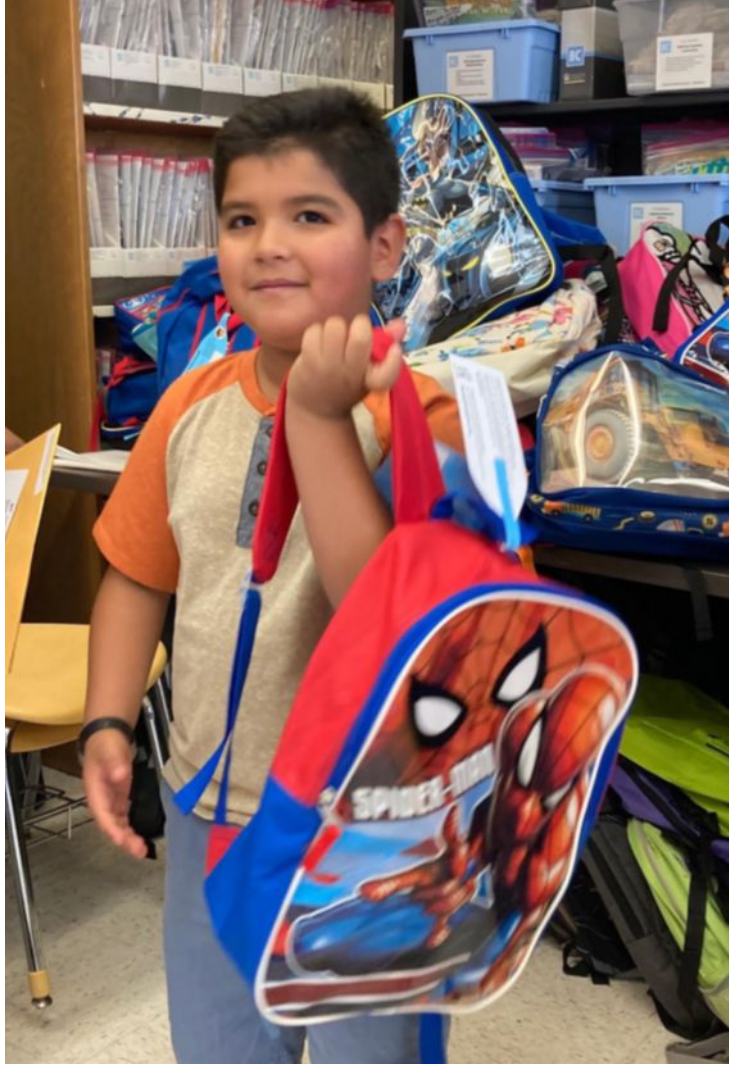
General info: info@fgt.org

Phone: 408-946-3111

Photos and Videos

2023 Back-to-School Drive Video Message

<https://youtu.be/P6FSGxyjDqQ>





Logos



Family Giving Tree™



Family Giving Tree™

Please note: logo image should only be used in lock-up with the Family Giving Tree name and only in the two formats noted above. If you have questions about logo use, please contact admin_comm@fgt.org

Empower. Uplift. Unite.

Equipping Students to Rise to New Heights

